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MEMORIAL ADDRESS

BY

HON. A. C. LATIMER,

OF SOUTH CAROLINA,

UPON THE

LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF

HON. JOSEPH H. EARLE,

(Late a Senator from the State of South Carolina),

DELIVERED IN THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

APRIL 23, 1898.

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Mr. W. A. Smith

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MEMORIAL ADDRESS UPON THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF HON. JOSEPH H. EARLE.

Mr. LATIMER. Mr. Speaker, the late Senator EARLE, whose memory we recall, and to whom we pay tribute to-day, was born in Greenville, S. C., on April 30, 1847. At the age of 2 years his mother died. At 5 years his father died. He was taken by his aunt, Mrs. Heriot, to her farm in Sumter, and cared for as her own child. He was trained by the hardships of farm life to that untiring energy and close economy which so aided him in achieving the success to which he attained in the hard struggle that ended only when death came. His early education was acquired under trying disadvantages, having to walk to school 3½ miles. When 14 years of age he had a serious accident. While riding a spirited horse on one occasion, the animal fell, breaking his leg in three places, causing him to be an invalid for more than a year. After his recovery he joined the Confederate army in July, 1864, and made a gallant soldier.

Ardent, courageous, patriotic, and loyal to his State, he grasped the sword in her defense. Through hardship and untold privations he followed the immortal leaders of the Southern army, amid the vicissitudes of fortune, to their final defeat.

After the war there was nothing in the outlook of the country nor in its social and political condition to animate or give buoyancy to his youthful spirits or to guide him to an elevated plane of manhood and usefulness. His aunt's house lay in the track of the Union Army, and desolation all around, and a thorough social upheaval, united with a galling oppression from without, tended to make the prospect cheerless and hopeless. But that manly courage which he inherited and hardihood acquired by his experience as a soldier qualified him for the conquest of adverse conditions and for his final triumph over all discouragements.

Among his most striking characteristics was self-reliance, and it stood in good stead at this trying period.

His education was meager, such only as he had acquired in the common schools. Realizing the importance of education, he entered Furman University, and there pursued his studies until forced to leave college because his meager means were exhausted. Not having sufficient money to complete his education, he taught school for two years, thereby making money with which to pay, in part, obligations contracted at the university. During this time he studied law. In 1869 he married his cousin, a daughter of Col. John Baylis Earle, of Anderson County, and moved to Anderson, and there began the practice of his profession. After one year's residence in Anderson he moved to Sumter, S. C., and there, among the friends and scenes of his childhood, continued his career as a lawyer and public man. He took a prominent part in the memorable political campaign of 1876, when the State was redeemed from carpetbag rule.

He was elected in 1878 to the lower house of the legislature, in 1882 to the State senate, and in 1886 he was elected attorney-general. In 1888 he was offered the nomination of governor, but declined on account of pledges to his friends. In the memorable campaign of 1890 a thorough canvass of the State was made for the office of governor by Captain Tillman and General EARLE, when political feeling ran high and thousands of admiring friends greeted the noted South Carolinians at each county seat in the State. When public sentiment was largely against Senator EARLE, the manner in which he met his opponent and the manly courage and heroic faith in the cause he championed won for him the respect and admiration of all who witnessed the contest. Though defeated for the office of governor of South Carolina, his manly bearing in defeat so endeared him to the people of the State that at the first opportunity—in 1894—he was elected circuit judge by a legislature composed largely of his old opponents. In 1896 he was chosen to fill the highest office in the gift of his State—that of United States Senator. He took his seat March 4, 1897, and died May 20 of the same year.

The people of South Carolina expected much of Senator EARLE

in his new field. Nobly endowed, with devoted to his State and to his people, we have [illegible] untarnished, much of him. Those who differed from him still entertained expect him the most marked respect. His powers in debate were of the highest order. He was always cool and clear-headed and often aggressive. His courage was unsurpassed, as his supporters and opponents will alike bear witness. His honesty was unquestioned and his conduct was always above reproach. His experience as a lawyer and judge made him conservative and fair-minded. He never descended to low personalities when engaged in controversies nor assailed character when in partisan warfare. Vituperation was foreign to his nature.

His public record covers a period when courage, high ability, and absolute integrity were required to meet grave and important exigencies. It is a proud satisfaction to know that his connection with the history of South Carolina and the part he bore in all these trying emergencies were wholly honorable to himself and conspicuously serviceable to his State and country. His was a changeless sincerity. He was never in disguise. He was the soul of honor, and had a contempt for anything mean or sordid. So highly endowed was he by nature and with so many estimable traits, he was particularly fitted to discharge the duties of the exalted positions to which he was called by an admiring people. He enjoyed the companionship of friends and made it pleasant and enjoyable for them to be with him. High-toned, manly, and dignified in manner and conduct, he treated everyone, both high and low, in the way becoming a gentleman, and he expected like treatment in return. He was a genuine type of the best element of the South.

He was called apparently before his work was finished. He did not die of old age, nor of lingering decay. Death came to him in the fullness of his powers. Step by step he had climbed the ladder of fame and filled each station with great ability. He had just reached the goal of his ambition when elected to the United States Senate. However, the full measure of his capabilities had not been reached, and his career was prematurely brought to a close by an untimely death. He was an active worker up to the very

close of his life. When the end came, there was no stain upon his name and his name was undimmed. His name will survive long in the history of his State and the country.

As has been well said, "the history of man and human progress is a story of sacrifice, devotion, and self-denial. As we look down the ages and let pass before the view the toils and the struggles, the failures and the successes, the lights and the shades of human character and efforts, and, above all, when we look into our own souls and try to square ambition with achievement, desire with consummation, hope with possibility—aye, all the contradictions and paradoxes of conduct and aspiration—we rise from the contemplation with the conviction that through all these there is a higher destiny."

Mr. Speaker, that this noble man spent nearly fifty years in the battle of life, and a large part of that time in the public service of his State, and passed through the most heated political contest known to South Carolina, or to any other State, and with a large majority of his people against him, and yet not one charge of any kind was ever made affecting his honor, integrity, or ability, marked him as one of the noblest works of God—"an honest man." No South Carolinian ever felt that the honor or dignity of his State would ever be lowered while intrusted to JOSEPH EARLE.

He was of the solid, even-tempered, well-balanced order of men, to whom only can the safety and perpetuity of great interests and the grave responsibilities of guiding a great country be confidently intrusted. For the emulation of youth a nobler example than our deceased friend has left us can scarcely be presented.

In his death the State has lost the service of one of her truest sons; the nation a statesman of the greatest promise.

Fortunate are we if this pause in the busy duties of public service shall aid us in making ready, as was Senator EARLE, for the call that came to him, and which will surely come to each of us. Would to God we had more such characters in public life—men who love the truth and spurn pretense; men who love God and whose lives mark their devotion to His precepts.

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